Rulings on Sujūd at-Tilāwah

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Rulings on *Sujūd at-Tilāwah*

A collection of Fatāwá of some of the major scholars of our era

Imām ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. ʿAbd Allāh Ibn Bāz {رَحِمَهُ ٱللَّهُ} stated:

"The prostration of Qurʾānic recitation (***Sujūd at-Tilāwah***) is a **recommended *Sunnah* practice.** These prostrations are specific and well-known passages within the *Qurʾān*, numbering **fifteen prostrations.** The first occurs toward the end of ***Sūrah al-Aʿrāf***, while the last occurs at the end of ***Sūrah Iqraʾ*** (i.e., *Sūrah al-ʿAlaq*).

When a believer encounters one of these verses outside the prayer (***Ṣalāh***), he performs the prostration. According to the strongest view (***aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ***), this may be done even without ritual purification (***Ṭahārah***), since purification is not a required condition for it.

However, it is preferable that he pronounce ***Takbīr*** once at the beginning, saying ***Allāhu Akbar***, after which he prostrates and says in the prostration what is said during the prostration of the prayer:

سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيَ الأَعْلَى

Subḥāna Rabbī al-Aʿlá
Glory be to my Lord, the Highest.

He may repeat it and supplicate (***Duʿāʾ***) with whatever supplications are easy for him. There is **no concluding salutation** (***Taslīm***) in this prostration, nor is there a second ***Takbīr*** upon rising. This is the **preferred opinion** and the **best view** (***al-Arjaḥ***).

If the reciter encounters such a verse **during the prayer**, then the prostration is legislated (***Mashrūʿ***) for him. This applies especially in

audible prayers (***aṣ-Ṣalawāt al-Jahrīyah***), such as:

• *Maghrib*

• *ʿIshāʾ*

• *Fajr*

• *Ṣalāh al-Jumuʿah*

In such cases, the **congregation** (***Maʾmūmūn***) follows the **Imām** and prostrates with him if he prostrates.

However, in **silent prayers** (***aṣ-Ṣalawāt as-Sirrīyah***), if the reciter is acting as the ***Imām***, it is **not prescribed** for him to perform this prostration. The reason is that it may cause confusion or disturbance (***Tashwīsh***) among the congregation. Thus, if the verse occurs in the silent recitation of:

• ***Ṣalāh aẓ-Ẓuhr***

• ***Ṣalāh al-ʿAṣr***

• the **third unit (*Rakʿah*)** of ***Maghrib***

• the **third and fourth units** of ***ʿIshāʾ***

then the **preferable practice** is that he **does not prostrate**, so as to avoid disturbing the people.

If, however, he is **praying alone**, then there is no objection to performing the prostration in such silent recitations. This includes someone performing a **supererogatory prayer** (***Nāfilah***) or someone who missed the **obligatory prayer** (***Ṣalāh Farḍ***) and is praying it alone. In such cases there is no harm in performing ***Sujūd at-Tilāwah***, since there is no risk of disturbing others.

Within the prayer, the worshipper pronounces ***Takbīr*** during every movement of lowering and rising (***Khafḍ wa Rafʿ***). Thus, when he

prostrates, he says ***Takbīr***, and when he rises, he again says ***Takbīr***. This is because the Prophet ﷺ used to pronounce ***Takbīr*** in every movement of lowering and rising. This ruling includes ***Sujūd at-Tilāwah*** within the prayer.

Furthermore, ***Sujūd at-Tilāwah* is a *Sunnah* and not obligatory** (***Wājib***). This is demonstrated by what is authentically reported in ***aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥayn*** (the two authentic collections of **al-Bukhārī** and **Muslim**): Zayd b. Thābit {رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُ} recited ***Sūrah an-Najm*** to the Prophet ﷺ, and the Prophet ﷺ did **not prostrate** during it. This indicates that the prostration is **not obligatory**.

Likewise, **ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb {رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُ}** said:

"*Allāh has not made the prostration obligatory upon us except if we wish.*"

Meaning: whoever wishes may prostrate, and whoever wishes may refrain. Thus, it is **a *Sunnah* and not an obligation**."

Source: binbaz.org.sa | *Nūr ʿalá ad-Darb* | **Section**: *Aḥkām Sujūd at-Tilāwah*

Imām Moḥammad b. Ṣāliḥ al-ʿUthaymīn {رَحِمَهُ ٱللَّهُ}:

The second subject discussed in this chapter is **the prostration of recitation** (***Sujūd at-Tilāwah***).

The apparent meaning of the expression ***Sujūd at-Tilāwah*** suggests that it is a prostration caused by recitation, meaning that whenever one recites a verse he prostrates. However, this is not the case. The expression is **general yet restricted** (*ʿĀmm Makhṣūṣ*).

Thus, ***Sujūd at-Tilāwah*** refers specifically to prostration at its **designated places in the *Qurʾān***, meaning that it is a prostration triggered by recitation **when the recitation occurs at those specific passages**.

Sujūd at-Tilāwah* is an emphasized *Sunnah (*Sunnah Muʾakkadah*), and it is not appropriate for a person to abandon it. Some scholars even held that it is **obligatory** (*Wājib*), and that whoever abandons it is sinful.

However, the **correct** view is that it is **not obligatory**. The proof for this is that the Commander of the Believers **ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb** {رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُ} once recited ***Sūrah an-Naḥl*** while delivering the **Friday sermon** (*Khuṭbah al-Jumuʿah*). When he reached the verse of prostration he descended from the pulpit and prostrated.

Then he recited the same ***Sūrah*** on another Friday but **did not prostrate**, and he said:

"*Allāh has not made prostration obligatory upon us unless we wish.*"

He said this in the presence of the **Companions** (*Ṣaḥābah*), which indicates that the correct view is that ***Sujūd at-Tilāwah* is not obligatory**.

If someone asks: *What then is meant by the statement of Allāh Most High:*

وَإِذَا قُرِئَ عَلَيْهِمُ ٱلْقُرْءَانُ لَا يَسْجُدُونَ

"*And when the Qurʾān is recited to them, they do not prostrate.*"
(***Sūrah al-Inshiqāq*** 84:21)

Is this not describing the characteristic of the disbelievers?

The answer is that the prostration mentioned here refers merely to **humility and submission**. Allāh did not say: "*When a verse of prostration is recited to them.*" Rather He said:

"*When the Qurʾān is recited to them, they do not prostrate.*"

It is known through **explicit textual evidence and scholarly consensus** (*Naṣṣ wa Ijmāʿ*) that not every verse of the *Qurʾān* requires prostration. Therefore, the prostration intended here is **the prostration of humility and obedience**, meaning that they do not humble themselves nor submit. Instead, they display arrogance, and we seek refuge in Allāh from that.

However, the *Sujūd at-Tilāwah* has specific legal rulings.

First: Should a person perform it during the prayer (***Ṣalāh***) or not?
The answer is **yes.** The Prophet ﷺ recited during ***Ṣalāh al-ʿIshāʾ*** the 84th chapter ***Sūrah al-Inshiqāq*** and he prostrated during it. Thus, a person may perform ***Sujūd at-Tilāwah*** **even during the prayer itself.**

If he performs it within the prayer, he pronounces ***Takbīr*** when descending into the prostration and ***Takbīr*** when rising from it. This

corresponds to the general description transmitted from the Prophet ﷺ that he pronounced ***Takbīr* in every lowering and rising** (*Khafḍ wa Rafʿ*).

Those who narrated this from him, such as **ʿAbdullāh b. Masʿūd** and **Abū Hurayrah**, reported the general practice without excluding ***Sujūd at-Tilāwah***. This indicates that when the prostration occurs **within the prayer**, the worshipper pronounces ***Takbīr* both when descending and when rising**.

As for what some people do, namely pronouncing ***Takbīr* when descending but not when rising**, this is a misunderstanding. It is not based upon any sound foundation.

At most, such a person may have seen the statement of **Ibn al-Qayyim** {رَحِمَهُ ٱللَّهُ} in *Zād al-Maʿād*, where he stated that ***Takbīr* is pronounced when performing *Sujūd at-Tilāwah* but not when rising**.

However, Ibn al-Qayyim was referring **only to the independent prostration outside the prayer**, not the prostration occurring **within** the prayer.

As for the **independent** prostration, its ruling will be discussed shortly, if Allāh wills.

The conclusion is that when the prostration occurs within the prayer, one pronounces *Takbīr* when descending into the prostration and *Takbīr* when rising from it.

Then the question arises: should the verse of prostration be recited in **audible prayers** (*Ṣalāh al-Jahr*) and **silent prayers** (*Ṣalāh as-Sirr*)?

Some scholars held that it may be recited in both.

In **audible prayers**, this is established from the Prophet ﷺ and it does not confuse the congregation. The reason is that the followers hear the recitation and understand that the *Imām* has prostrated, so they prostrate as well.

However, regarding **silent prayers**, some scholars said that the *Imām* should not recite a verse of prostration in them. The reasoning is that one of two situations will occur:
1. Either he prostrates, which will confuse the congregation, because they will wonder why he prostrated when the position normally requires bowing (*Rukūʿ*).
2. Or he does not prostrate, in which case he has left the prostration.

This is the **well-known view in the *Ḥanbalī* school** (*Madhhab al-Imām Aḥmad*), which holds that it is **disliked** (*Makrūh*) for the *Imām* to recite a prostration verse in silent prayer and then prostrate.

Other scholars, however, held that **there is no dislike in doing so**. They cited a narration reported in ***Sunan Abī Dāwūd***, though its chain has some weakness, stating that the Prophet ﷺ recited ***Sūrah as-Sajdah*** during prayer and prostrated.

The **correct view** is that **there is no dislike** in reciting such a verse in silent prayer. Furthermore, if one recites it but does **not prostrate**, there is no harm, because the stronger opinion is that **the prostration is not obligatory but merely *Sunnah***.

Thus, if one prostrates, he receives reward, and if he does not prostrate there is no sin.

Regarding the prostration occurs **outside the prayer**, what should a person do?

He pronounces ***Takbīr* when descending into the prostration**, although the narration supporting this contains some weakness. For this reason, **Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah** {رَحِمَهُ ٱللَّهُ} held that one **does not pronounce *Takbīr***, but simply prostrates.

When he prostrates, he does so upon the **seven limbs** (*as-Sabʿah Aʿẓum*), due to the general statement of the Prophet ﷺ:

"*I have been commanded to prostrate upon seven bones.*"

In the prostration he says:

سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيَ الأَعْلَى

Subḥāna Rabbī al-Aʿlá
Glory be to my Lord, the Highest.

As the Prophet ﷺ said:

"*Place this in your prostration.*"

He repeats it as he would during the prayer. If he wishes he may also recite the supplication reported in the *Ḥadīth*:

اللَّهُمَّ لَكَ سَجَدْتُ، وَبِكَ آمَنْتُ، وَعَلَيْكَ تَوَكَّلْتُ، سَجَدَ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي خَلَقَهُ وَصَوَّرَهُ، وَشَقَّ سَمْعَهُ وَبَصَرَهُ بِحَوْلِهِ وَقُوَّتِهِ، اللَّهُمَّ اكْتُبْ لِي بِهَا أَجْرًا، وَضَعْ عَنِّي بِهَا وِزْرًا، وَاجْعَلْهَا لِي عِنْدَكَ ذُخْرًا.

Allāhumma Laka Sajadtu, wa-Bika Āmantu, wa-ʿAlayka Tawakkaltu, Sajada Wajhī li-llāhi alladhī Khalaqahu wa-Ṣawwarahu, wa-Shaqqa Samʿahu wa-Baṣarahu bi-Ḥawlihi wa-Quwwatihi, Allāhumma Uktub Lī bihā Ajran, wa-Ḍaʿ ʿAnnī bihā Wizran, wa-Ijʿalhā Lī ʿIndaka Dhukhran.

"*O Allāh, to You I have **prostrated**, in You I have **believed**, and upon You I **rely**. My face has **prostrated** to the One who **created** it and **fashioned** it, and who **split** open its hearing and sight by His power and strength. O Allāh, record for me through it a reward, remove from me through it a sin, and store it for me as a treasure with You.*"

As for ***Takbīr* when rising and giving *Taslīm***, this is **not legislated outside the prayer**, because this was not reported from the Prophet ﷺ.

Another question is whether one performs this prostration **during the times in which prayer is normally prohibited**.

The correct opinion is that **one performs it whenever he passes a verse of prostration**, whether during:

- *Ẓuhr*
- *ʿAṣr*
- *Fajr*
- *Maghrib*
- the night
- or the day

Whenever he encounters a verse of prostration he performs it as a **recommended act**.

The verses of prostration are well known. They number **fourteen throughout the *Qur'ān***, two of which occur in ***Sūrah al-Ḥajj***.

If a person passes a verse of prostration and **forgets to prostrate**, then if he remembers shortly afterward, he may still prostrate. However, if a long interval has passed, he does not perform it, because the juristic principle states:

When the time of a *Sunnah* act has passed, the act itself falls away, since it was attached to a specific cause which has now ceased.

And Allāh knows best.

Source: *Sharḥ Kitāb aṣ-Ṣalāh* **– 31**

ʿAllāmah Ṣāliḥ b. ʿAbdillāh al-Fawzān {حَفِظَهُ اللهُ}:

The prostration of recitation (***Sujūd at-Tilāwah***) is a ***Sunnah*** and **not obligatory** according to the majority of the scholars (***Jumhūr Ahl al-ʿIlm***). The proof for this is the statement of **ʿUmar** {رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُ}:

"Allāh has not made the prostration obligatory upon us except if we wish."

Performing it **from a standing position** (*Qiyām*) is **better and more complete.** However, if one performs the prostration **from a sitting position** (*Julūs*), then **there is no harm in that.**

Source: From the series "Light on the Path" (*Nūr ʿalá ad-Darb*) | Episode Number 213